

Maple Grove City Council work session

meeting minutes

March 20, 2023

Call to order

Pursuant to call and notice thereof, a work session meeting of the Maple Grove City Council was held at 5:45 p.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023 at the Maple Grove Government Center/Public Safety Facility, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

Present were Mayor Mark Steffenson, Councilmembers Judy Hanson, Kristy Barnett, Kristy Janigo, and Rachelle Johnson. Present also was City Administrator Heidi Nelson, Community and Economic Development Director Joe Hogeboom, Parks and Recreation Director Chuck Stifter, Finance Director Greg Sticha, Police Chief Eric Werner, Police Commander Jonathan Wetternach, and City Attorney Justin Templin.

Mayor Steffenson called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

Police Department Community Engagement Unit and outreach officer

Police Chief Werner noted that the Police Department is proposing the creation of a Community Engagement Unit, which includes two new positions: a sergeant to lead the unit and a Community Center outreach officer. These positions are part of the five-year staffing plan submitted for the budget years 2023-2024. The sergeant position is proposed for approval in the 2024 budget, with hiring in early 2024. The Community Center outreach officer is proposed for approval in the 2025 budget, with hiring in early 2025. Other funding sources and hiring timelines are also being considered.

Police Chief Werner explained the importance of this new position regarding community engagement initiatives. Maple Grove Police Department has several annual programs that require significant department resources, such as Neighborhood Watch, National Night Out, Shop-with-a-Cop, and Maple Grove Days. Additionally, there are year-round programs such as Badges & Bobbers, Blue Lights Initiative, and Coffee-with-a-Cop, among others. The department also provides on-demand presentations to various organizations and offers services such as free gun locks and educational workshops. Some of the department's current outreach and crime prevention programming needs include a bike registration program, quarterly newsletters for rental apartment complexes, and fatal vehicle display/ impaired driving education.

Police Chief Werner highlights that the Community Engagement Unit (CEU) aims to consolidate all community outreach and engagement work under one sergeant's direction. The CEU will be staffed by a Community Engagement Sergeant (CES), a Community Center Outreach Officer (CCOO), and a Community Outreach Specialist (COS). The unit's mission is to prevent

crime through various initiatives, including Community Center outreach, engagement with faith-based organizations, police-community engagement committee, enhanced recruitment efforts, and implementation of community emergency response teams. The success of the Community Center outreach program will be evaluated periodically using calls-for-service data, survey data, and other metrics.

Commander Wetternach went on to talk about how the city's 2022 community survey shows a drop in the overall rating for crime prevention services from 86% in 2016 to 76%. Additionally, the ratings for police-community relations observed a shift. The Police Department's current community outreach and engagement services contribute to the high ratings in the "not a problem" category. The city's population has grown by 8,590 residents from 2010 to 2020 while becoming more diverse. The changing demographics provide the need and opportunities for the Police Department to expand its community engagement and outreach services. The Community Center receives part-time police coverage, which impacts the police service to the community because it removes an officer from patrol and provides a mostly response-based model to the Community Center. The number of cases involving Part A and Part B crimes at the Community Center has remained relatively consistent over the past four years.

Police Chief Werner stated the Maple Grove Community Center requires security and emergency management planning for daily operations and to respond to any emerging event, especially with the reinvestment expansion. The Community Center engagement officer would be a security team member that collaborates with ISD 279 staff and school resource officers for joint training, planning, exercising, and communication. The ISD 279 staff also wants the Maple Grove Community Center to be the designated family reunification site for students evacuated from Maple Grove schools during an armed intruder or similar incidents, as Maple Grove parents prefer their children to be brought to the Maple Grove Community Center and not out of the city limits to the Brooklyn Park Community Center.

The Council discussed whether or not the CEU model is similar to a School Resource Officer (SRO) model and whether the focus should be on emergency response and serving families and seniors. The Council talked about having security guards at the Community Center and improving emergency management programs. The Council also discussed the value added by creating a new Community Engagement Unit. The Council questioned if a patrol officer could be reassigned to patrol the Community Center and suggested having a staff member of the Park Board available to handle issues at night.

The Council further discussed the need for a sergeant, and pulling a patrol officer for this program. The Council discussed multiple ways for community engagement beyond the Community Center, but agreed that having a law enforcement presence at the Community Center could be beneficial. Further, the Council noted if the Community Center were to get a full-time officer, there should be a budget line item from the Park Board. In addition, the Council stated the need for the City of Maple Grove High School students to go to the Maple Grove Community Center for evacuation in an emergency.

The consensus of the Council was to further discuss this topic and the details of the Community Engagement Unit at a future 2024 budget work session.

**Other items as
deemed necessary**

Councilmembers discussed the roles and responsibilities of Council liaisons on the boards, committees, and commissions that they serve.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Steffenson at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Nelson
City Administrator